(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Government are aware of the reports that Sikh religious shrines in Pakistan are not being maintained properly and their sanctity is not being preserved.

(b) Under the Protocol on 'Visits to Religious Shrines' signed between India and Pakistan in September, 1974 it is the obligation of the concerned country to make every effort to ensure that the places of worship in the agreed list are properly maintained and their sanctity preserved. Government, from time to time, have taken up the issue with the Government of Pakistan through diplomatic channels, including demarche made to Pakistani Cd'A recently, to express their concern regarding poor maintenance of religious shrines in Pakistan.

Loss of hydrocarbons due to US-Iraq War

3653. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the US and allied forces have torched many oil fields in Iraq war;

(b) if so, the loss of hydrocarbon availability to the universe;

(c) whether there is any provision in the UN Charter that no country would destroy the natural gifted global utility sources in other country;

(d) if so, whether it may be enforced in war on Iraq; and

(e) what would be impact of the destruction of the Iraqi oilfields to economies of India and the world?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) A few oil fields have reportedly been set on fire during the war in Iraq. There is no definite information on what caused oil fields fires and the loss of hydrobarbon availability to the universe.

(c) No.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Prior to the war, Iraq produced about 3% of global crude output. India has not lifted oil directly from Iraq since December, 2000. There has been no disruption in the import of crude oil by India on account of war. India has adequate foreign exchange reserves to meet any short term rise in crude oil prices.

Indo-German Agreement

3654. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the German President recently visited New Delhi.

(b) if so, the agreement to MOUs signed during the visit for closer ties between the two countries; and

(c) whether he supported India's claim for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Dr. Johannes Rau, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, paid a State visit to India from 2-7 March, 2003. The Memorandum of Understanding on an Indo-German Institute for Advanced Technology to be set up in Vishakapatnam, which was signed during the visit, indicates the close cooperation between the two countries in education and science.

(c) In a press interview on 3rd March, 2003, President Rau said that given the role India plays in today's world, India is a natural candidate for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Re-negotiation on Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty

3655. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any talks have been held with Nepal for re-negotiating the existing Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty and extradition treaty; and

(b) if so, the progress made, so far, in this regard alongwith the details of the new treaties, if any, since negotiated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) The Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty